

On October 26th, 2010, I lost my best friend, Sparkles (the Fire Safety Dog). Sparkles was rescued from a home with 62 dogs and gained international attention with her fire safety efforts since being adopted in 2003. Sparkles loved being a part of the fire service.

Best known for her red toenails and tail that never stopped wagging, Sparkles loved the fire service. It was though she was born to be a fire safety educator. Sparkles found her calling in the fire service; she loved nothing more than being with children and demonstrating fire safety messages for her friends.

During her lifetime, Sparkles reached millions of children and their caregivers; she helped save the lives of seven children and two adults. Little Angelica Riggins, then age 5, shared this story with me after she completely lost her home to fire. "I was under the 'cobers' and the smoke came. I got down low and crawled, just like Sparkles told me to. I said, 'Daddy, Daddy, you have to get down and crawl low just like Sparkles'."



*Sparkles with Angelica, 5, and Dystiny, 9
Sparkles helped save the lives of Angelica,
Dystiny and the lives of their families*

By this time Angelica's dad was disoriented due to the smoke, but he was able to follow Angelica out of the house. The firefighters later shared with me that the minute Angelica's father reached the threshold of the door, the house flashed over. Fortunately, they were able to get him out safely due to Angelica's quick thinking. We were so very thankful that Angelica and her father were safe. Sparkles and I have, and will continue, to keep children, like Angelica, safe from fire.

The inspiration for Sparkles came to me when I was taking a public education class at the National Fire Academy. Therefore, the Academy will always hold a special place in my heart. To carry on Sparkles' legacy and to support the work of the National Fallen Firefighter's Foundation, we have worked with National Fallen Firefighter Foundation to establish, "Sparkles' Pathway" on the Walk of Honor® on the National Emergency Training Center campus. This special walkway will not only memorialize Sparkles and her tireless efforts to help keep children fire safe, but it will also serve as a reminder of the importance of fire safety to those who trod on the Sparkles' Pathway for many, many years to come.

Today, Sparkles' work is being continued through her friends, Siren and Tango. These two Dalmatians are stepping up to the plate for Sparkles, and they are especially looking forward to helping support the work of National Fallen Firefighter Foundation. Will you please join Tango and Siren in this worthy effort by donating for a brick in this special section? Now is the time to show your support for Fire Safety Education and the National Fallen Firefighter Foundation by helping to complete this permanent tribute to the American Fire Service.

Firefighter Dayna Hilton

Memorial Service

Celebrating the life of

Sparkles the Fire Safety Dog

1998-2010



June 29, 2011

Sparkles' Pathway

National Fallen Firefighter Foundation

Walk of Honor

National Emergency Training Center

Emmitsburg, Maryland



The Starfish Story

by Loren Eiseley (1907 - 1977)

Once upon a time, there was a wise man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach before he began his work.

One day, as he was walking along the shore, he looked down the beach and saw a human figure moving like a dancer. He smiled to himself at the thought of someone who would dance to the day, and so, he walked faster to catch up.

As he got closer, he noticed that the figure was that of a young man, and that what he was doing was not dancing at all. The young man was reaching down to the shore, picking up small objects, and throwing them into the ocean.

He came closer still and called out "Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?"

The young man paused, looked up, and replied "Throwing starfish into the ocean."

"I must ask, then, why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?" asked the somewhat startled wise man.

To this, the young man replied, "The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them in, they'll die."

Upon hearing this, the wise man commented, "But, young man, do you not realize that there are miles and miles of beach and there are starfish all along every mile? You can't possibly make a difference!"

At this, the young man bent down, picked up yet another starfish, and threw it into the ocean. As it met the water, he said, "It made a difference for that one."

Sparkles the Fire Safety Dog Memorial Service

June 29, 2011

Welcome and Introductions

Dr. Harry Carter, Municipal Fire Protection Specialist

Welcome from the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation

Linda Hurley, Director of Survivor Programs

National Fallen Firefighters Foundation

Welcome from the National Fire Academy

Dr. Kirby Kiefer, Deputy Superintendent, National Fire Academy

Letters of Remembrance

Senator John Boozman

Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe

Eulogy

Dr. Harry Carter

Memories of Sparkles

Deb Hanson, Sparkles' Biggest Supporter

Ryan Czech. Age 6 and Sparkles' #1 Fan

Special Presentation to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation

Firefighter Dayna Hilton



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